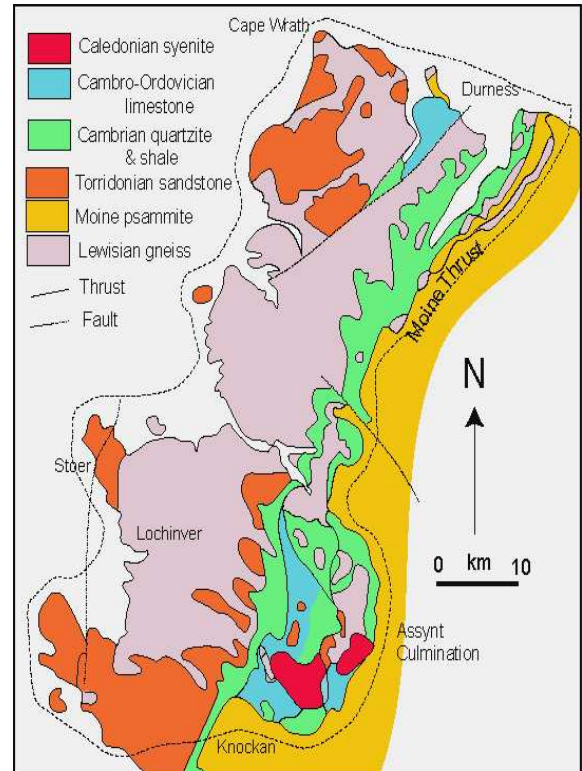


North West Highlands GEOPARK *Iar-Thuath na Gàidhealtachd*

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Where is the Geopark? What is the Geopark? What does it mean for the local area?

It starts at The Summer Isles in Wester Ross and continues northwards through west Sutherland to the north coast. The Geopark extends to the east of Durness, beyond Loch Eriboll, and on to The Moine. The eastern boundary of the Geopark largely follows the Moine Thrust zone, a famous and important geological structure as detailed in map opposite → →



Since being endorsed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as Scotland's first Geopark in 2004, our Geopark is one of 32 Partners in the European Geopark Network, and globally there are 55 Geoparks, Lochaber gained this much sought-after status in 2007.

UNESCO : The Organisation

Founded in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (is today composed of 191 Member States. The Governing bodies (General Conference and Executive Board) meet periodically to assure proper functioning, establish priorities and set goals for the Secretariat, headed by the Director-General. In short, UNESCO promotes international co-operation among its 193 Member States and six Associate Members in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

A Geopark is a place where you will experience the incredible legacy left by an extraordinary geological past. Our mountains and coasts, our flora and fauna, our communities and culture – all owe a great deal to the difference which this geology makes. It is a status awarded in acknowledgement of our world class geology and active communities, which in turn opens up opportunities.

The Geopark means a focus on sustainable development and a chance to put forward local ideas for what that should involve. In other places this has meant development of local produce, arts and cultural events, developments in local education and research - and green tourism

European Geopark Week 27 May to 7 June 2008

May was a busy time for the Geopark with a programme of activities for all ages. This was part of European Geopark Week which is held annually across the European Geopark Network area. Big walks, fascinating talks, coastal jaunts and more, all in the stunning scenery of northwest Sutherland. Highland Council Rangers reported healthy turnouts for their walks which ranged from the Rock Route to Scourie Dykes and Garnets, and the Faraid Head Puffin Colony.

There was also a good turnout for the talks on “Stone Voices” by SNH Geologist John Gordon, and “Stoer – A Billion Years before Yesterday” by author Malcolm Rider.

“the amazing geology of Durness beaches”



New Boundary Signs

The last two boundary signs, on the minor roads leading into the Geopark, are now in place -

The first one is on the Allt Eilagg, coming from Lairg via Ledmore on the A837 on the Lairg side of the bridge.



The second one from Lairg via Achfary on the A838, on the Lairg side of small bridge and crash barrier.



And now for a maths lesson, in **Fractal Geometry**.

The geometry of the fourth dimension - fractal geometry - was created almost single-handedly by Benoit Mandelbrot, who was born in Warsaw in 1924 to a Lithuanian Jewish family and moved to Paris in 1936. It is now recognized as the true Geometry of Nature. We now know that Euclidian geometry pertained only to the artificial realities of the first, second and third dimensions. These dimensions are imaginary. Only the fourth dimension is real. Mandelbrot's formula summarizes many of the insights he gained into the fractal geometry of nature, the real world of the fourth dimension. **For instance, if you look at the irregular shape of a mountain, then look closer at a small part of the mountain, you will find the same basic shape of the whole mountain repeated again on a smaller scale. When you look closer still you see the same shape again, and so on to infinity.**

Was this why these particular stones were chosen and placed in these particular spots?

Local Games and Gatherings - Summer 2008

As part of the aim to raise awareness of the Geopark within the area, Fiona and Evelyn will be attending the local games and gatherings across North West Sutherland – namely Coigach, Kinlochbervie, Durness and Assynt. The first, the Coigach Gathering took place on a wonderfully sunny Saturday (5 July) on Badentarbet Green. There was an information, leaflet and poster display for adults well as pebble painting, puzzles and pictures to colour for the children. It was so busy with pebble painting that we had to raid the beach for reinforcements! Let's hope the others are just as popular and fun - we hope to see you at one of them ...

3rd International Conference on Geoparks – Communicating Earth Heritage

Osnabruck, Germany, June 2008

Geopark Officer, Fiona Mackenzie attended this conference as well as the 1st Global Geoparks Fair. The goal of the Fair was to raise awareness of Global Geoparks locally, and for us, to encourage German tourists to Scotland, especially with the Euro exchange rate in their favour. The Fair was opened by Prof Dr Hans-Gert Pottering, President of the European Parliament, and Walter Hirche, President of the German UNESCO Commission. We had a joint stand at the Fair with Lochaber Geopark and had three pipers from the British Legion Osnabruck Pipe Band which attracted many visitors to our stand. The Fair was held in the historic and beautiful square at Osnabruck and was indeed, a tourist attraction. The Conference itself had a variety of talks on geology, tourism, activities, interpretation, conservation, events and shared projects.



Emma & Matt



Potential Geopark visitors



One of the street performers!

As part of the Global Geoparks Fair and International Conference, there was a 'Meet your Geopark' youth camp/school project and Murdo Macpherson from Kinlochbervie High School attended with 4 pupils from KLB and Ullapool High Schools (Emma Adam, Niamh O'Driscoll, Matt Edwards and Darren Gordon). This youth development project was a success with involvement from schools from Slovenia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Portugal, Germany, England and Scotland. Our pupils participated in a number of workshops ranging from experimental archaeology, tool making and pottery as well as active pursuits including climbing, archery, cycling and barbeques. They also presented at the main International Conference with their project "NW Highlands Geopark – not just a pile of rocks". The four received high praise from conference delegates for their ability to portray effectively the physical landscape and what it means to live in Scotland's first Geopark. Their time in Germany not only helped to raise the profile of our Geopark, but more importantly it has helped them develop a confidence in an international setting and expanded their horizons. The pupils are now considering forming a Geopark youth group to carry the momentum forward by means of further developing the international links which have already been made and encouraging activities within our own Geopark. Many thanks to Murdo for undertaking this youth project and supervising and ensuring all went well. The pupils, and I'm sure Murdo, thoroughly enjoyed their time abroad and we thank them for doing such a good job of promoting our Geopark.



Emma talking to other European students at our stand



Dignitaries trying out the pipes!



Matt's presentation about our Geopark

The aim of the Conference was to raise awareness of the geological heritage of our planet – far beyond the Geopark's borders. Keynote speakers at the Conference were Klaus Liedtke, editor in chief of National Geographic Deutschland; Eduardo F J de Mulder, Executive Director of the International Year of Planet Earth Secretariat; and Prof Ross Dowling, organiser of the Inaugural International Geotourism Conference to be held in August this year in Perth, Australia. As the first for Fiona, she found the Global Fair and International Conference a welcome learning curve and very useful in networking and understanding cultural differences and variety of geoparks across the global network. The 4th International Conference will be held in Lankwai, Malaysia in 2009.

How is the Geopark Organised?

The Geopark is managed by Sutherland Partnership a Company Limited by Guarantee and is a formal alliance between the key public, private, community and voluntary sector bodies within Sutherland. To help manage the Geopark and maintain strong local participation, a local Steering Group was established and the two members of staff are now based in Lochinver. The Steering Group comprises representatives of the five Community Councils – Durness, Kinlochbervie, Scourie, Assynt and Coigach – and the key public agencies, namely, The Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, British Geological Survey, Visit Scotland and Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise.

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